

# National Catholic Theater Conference

## PRODUCTION CALENDAR

Vol. 1

March 1942

No. 6

CALIFORNIA TO NEW YORK

CONGRATULATIONS AGAIN, MR. LILLY

WINDOWS AND IDEAS

THEATER OF WAR

ANOTHER SORROW, ANOTHER SONG

THE BELASCO CUP

LEADS FOR WOMEN

MARCH PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS

THE SILENT THEATER

R/ FOR PLAYS

CUES FOR CASH

NOTES FROM HEADQUARTERS

To those who may ask please say that the Conference will work harder than ever during the straitened times ahead to fulfill the duty it has assumed of advancing the standards of Catholic Theater.

The job our member groups are doing is important for morale and morals in this war of nerves. Our best efforts shall be devoted to encouraging and helping them to spread Catholic culture.

Tel: Circle 7-0236

316 West 57 Street, New York

Established 1937

#### EMMET LAVERY'S CROSS COUNTRY TRIP

Mr. Lavery has had an opportunity to do real missionary work for Catholic theater this winter in California, and he has been successful in interesting several groups in the Conference. But we were glad to have him back in the East on a short visit this month. He had stopped in Chicago en route where he picked up, first hand, enthusiastic reactions to the Dubuque Meeting.

#### WINDOWS AND IDEAS

Father Nagle's significant statement for "The Reaper," a publication of West Philadelphia Catholic Girls' High School, awakens new thoughts for both the advocate and spectator of Catholic theater.

He affirmed, "Catholic effort and Catholic money are still interested in building cathedrals and erecting stained glass windows on which they can put a plaque. Our contention is that you can destroy a stained glass window in ten seconds, and a cathedral in ten minutes - but you can't change an idea."

In the same publication Emmet Lavery is quoted as saying, "If the youth of the Church believes in the possibilities of Catholic theater, the drama will go forward. Youth can and will fight for what it believes."

The special drama issue of "The Reaper" reached a high peak in high school journalism. Congratulations to all the members of its staff and to the Drama Department of the high school which is able to foster so much interest in theater.

#### ON DEADLINES

We won't be bashful about telling you we have, on occasion, been severely upbraided. The Production Calendar doesn't reach you in time for you to go to enjoy the play your neighbor Conference member is producing.

But we do want the Calendar to be valuable to you, so to each of you we flash an S.O.S. Let us know as early as possible what you are planning to produce so that we may include advance notices -- mail us your news tips by the FIRST OF EACH MONTH -- we'll boost your publicity campaign!

#### PAUL LILLY, MID-WEST REGIONAL CHAIRMAN

Congratulations to Mr. Paul Lilly, the new Chairman of the Mid-West Region, and all our good wishes to him and his assistants for the planning of the next regional convention to be held at Detroit - this coming Fall, it is hoped. Mr. Lilly and his associates have certainly learned the secret of working hard - but of having fun while they're doing it.

#### ANOTHER SORROW, ANOTHER SONG

Champions of Francis Thompson and all who cannot but be held by the compelling beauty of his poetry will be delighted with this excerpt of a letter from the poet's sister, Sister Mary Austin, who writes to the New York Blackfriars from Manchester, England.

"My brother, Francis Thompson, seems to have become dear to very many of the United States' inhabitants. I mean his literary work has been taken to their hearts; more so even than in this country.

"It was very kind of you to send me the programme of the drama based on my brother's life. The tragedy of that life, at one time, took away much of the pleasure that otherwise I would have had in his wonderful poems. However, God willed it for some good --- indeed, I know positively more than one person has been brought into the true Fold through his poems, especially by the celebrated "Hound of Heaven." Please give Francis a remembrance in your prayers."

#### THEATER OF WAR

Newspapers frequently term a fighting front a "theater of war." Taking a cue from a headline story, John J. Givney, President of the Blackfriars' Guild of Troy, answered a Chamber of Commerce request for a dramatic piece based on the Bill of Rights. On February 14, Mr. Givney started to write; in two days the twenty-five minute script was cast, memorized, rehearsed, and the set was readied. Three hundred guests at dinner on February 17 applauded a finished performance of a dramatic story through which the characters expressed their thoughts on the Bill of Rights --- the created characters were General MacArthur's harried troops on the besieged Bataan peninsula.

If you have come upon references to the Belasco Cup Tournament, you may be interested in hearing more about this event, which at one time represented the climax of fifty little theater tourneys throughout the country.

To the contest in New York came groups from Colorado, Alabama, Texas (several times Cup winner), Florida - in fact from every section of the United States, as well as from England and Scotland - winners of the Lord Howard DeWalden Cup for the United Kingdom.

At a professional theater in New York four plays were produced each evening of tournament week by four different groups. This continued from Monday to Friday. Five judges witnessed all productions, and after the twentieth performance on Friday night, they selected the best four plays according to the following standards: 50% for interpretation (or "how well the idea is got over"); 25% for acting; 15% for setting; 10% for selection of play.

The best four productions were repeated Saturday afternoon and evening. At the afternoon performance the judges voted one the best of the quartet and Cup winner.

Definite rules controlled delivery of scenery and properties, rehearsal time, and back-stage assignments. The names of the plays to be given had to be in the hands of the New York management at least a month before scheduled tournament opening.

One of the old programs we have seen includes an illuminating article on little theater which holds a message for all Catholic groups. For lack of space we limit the quotes to high spots:

"Nothing remains stationary - if the down-hill journey is to be avoided what ought we to do? Far from difficulties decreasing with success, reputation and large membership, they definitely increase; the productions are finer, there are more helpers, the work in general is more worth doing; but the spirit of joyful adventure tends to disappear and serious difficulties of administration and organization tend to creep in. The movement remorselessly creates wholtime jobs without making them in any way remunerative. Supplies of devoted workers are limited."

Amateur play production is a killing routine, and an article like this brings forcibly before us the need to recall often our purpose and goal if we count on these props to carry us through difficult scenes.

During Mr. Lavery's recent visit to New York the local members of the Executive Committee got together for an informal session. The chief subject of conversation, in line with the professed aim of encouraging and helping member groups to meet their new problems, was the search for plays with a majority of parts for women.

The following suggestions came out of that meeting:

"Nine Till Six," a three-act comedy by Aimee and Philip Stuart about working girls. French is the publisher, royalty \$25, copies 75¢; modern; 3 interiors.

"Letters to Lucerne", new play done this season on Broadway about a girls' boarding school in Switzerland and how the war affected the lives of the girls. Also Samuel French; royalty on application; 2 interiors (or special treatment for one set version); 4 m, 9 f.

French has available a new comedy produced professionally so far only in England - "A Quiet Wedding." Calls for 10 f., 5 m; two interiors, modern costumes; royalty \$25, play copies 75¢.

Emmet Lavery's "Brief Music" is for 7 girls - no men, and needs only one interior. This play about college life has several good characterizations for young actors who don't want to have to look 50 years old to prove they can act. Royalty \$25, and copies may be had from French in paper (75¢) or cloth-bound (\$1.50).

"The Voice and the Word" by Henri Gheon referred to in this issue under March Production Schedule, requires only one man -- an unusual adaptation of the Passion Play which you may want to keep in mind for next year.

- - - - -

"El Cristo," one-act drama by Margaret Larkin about Passion Players in Mexico, won the Belasco Cup Tournament in 1926. Some winners of other years were: "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," "The No'Count Boy," "Judge Lynch," and "Mr. Sampson."

- - - - -

Rumors persist of the spread of the Catholic Drama Summer School movement. Fr. Bonn's sessions at Boston College last summer, of course, were very successful in tackling the problem from the community aspect.

## MARCH PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

Chicago - The Rosary College Drama Department, with Sister Mary Peter, O.P., directing, presented Henri Gheon's "The Voice and the Word" as guest performers at the Loyola Community Theatre. Emmet Lavery writes us of this on his return trip to California, suggesting that this liturgical play is ideal for women's colleges - with its fine music and nice choric effects.

Richmond - Traditional Passion Play takes the Lenten spotlight. A revised version of "When Pilate Judges," including a greater dramatization of Calvary, will be presented by the Catholic Theatre Guild. A choral group in classic costume will add intermission interest.

Worcester - The Playshop Members have scheduled a Lenten Biblical play for Mar. 29 at Holy Cross College.

New York - Fordham University, for its annual Greek play, is presenting "Eumenides" by Aeschylus. Not a translation - remember.

Detroit - Revisions have been made this year in the staging of the Catholic Theatre Guild's annual Passion Play, which was written and is directed by Father Hannick, Moderator of the Guild. The drama of the Passion is enacted simultaneously with scenes from the Mass, and in the past this has proved instructive as well as devotional.

## APRIL PREVIEWS

The New York Blackfriars are planning for a nine-day run, at the end of the month, of Father Nagle's "Savonarola." 'The last the best of all the game' is their motto for the final production of the season.

Catholic Girls' High School of Los Angeles has selected Emmet Lavery's "Brief Music" for a big spring production.

As we go to press the Theatre Arts Guild of Grand Rapids sends us word of its intention to stage "The Cradle Song" at the end of April.

- - - - -

Our idea of solid entertainment may be had at a certain movie house in New York where for three weeks they have held over a double Dostoyevsky program including "The Brothers Karamazov" and "Crime and Punishment."

## NOTES FROM HEADQUARTERS

Mr. Otto Wenzler, who has been Regional Chairman of the Conference in Toledo for several years, visited headquarters recently and left us the script of a radio play for Lincoln's birthday in which he and Mrs. Wenzler had recently appeared. A new version of 'two crooks and a lady.'

## R/ FOR PLAYS

Sprinkle eleven adjectives among one hundred verbs -no more, no less- according to an authoritative bit of research. But if you want to be more generous with your adjectives, stick to scientific works (76:100) or Ph. D. dissertations (88:100).

## CUE FOR CASH

(From The Prompter, bulletin of the Catholic Theatre of Detroit)

"We did it, didn't we? We made money on 'East Lynne' by the simple process of enjoying the show ahead of time, telling our friends about it, and selling tickets for it."

Simple --- and effective!

## THE SILENT THEATER

Silence became part of the language of the theater when Madrid recently opened Spain's first theater for deafmutes under the auspices of Catholic Action.

Popular dramas, rewritten for the language of hands, will star deafmute actors and actresses and will be presented every week.

## FEBRUARY REVIEWS

Troy - The Blackfriars' Guild presented "Mr. and Mrs. North" to two packed houses on Feb. 12 and 13. Local newspapers echoed enthusiastic audiences and singled it as a "triumph."

Detroit - Detroit greeted the Catholic Theatre Guild's production of "East Lynne" with authentic melodramatic vim, booing, and hissing and hooplaing in the right place. The press virtually stamped its feet and whistled too for the fine acting -- while "sneering" the taste of our ancestors who popularized the feeble plot eighty years ago.

